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A Word of Thanks

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A WORD OF THANKS

IT IS with deep gratitude to God and to our many friends that we enter upon our second year. When the first volume of THE BRIDGE appeared, its editors were hopeful that it would be well received. But none of us dared think that it would be asked for in every continent and that a second large printing would soon be required. Nor did we expect so many distinguished responses, of which I can record only a few.

We are grateful to Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, Dean of the College of Cardinals, who told us how glad he was that THE BRIDGE gave thought to the Jewish tradition of old. Ever since his seminary days fifty-five years ago, he wrote, he has felt that Christians must know the apocryphal and rabbinical literature for the sake of the insights it yields "about the times near to our Redemption." He added that "the findings of Qumran will open a new field of studies where Christians and Jews will be able to collaborate." We are grateful to Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston, who spoke in a broadcast about THE BRIDGE's "high level of scholarship, fruitful of understanding and love and grace"; and to Sister Madeleva, C.S.C., president of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, who, calling it "magnificent, more than a year-book," predicted that it would be "something of an encyclopedia."

We are grateful to Rabbi Leo Baeck of London, the venerable survivor of the cruelties of Theresienstadt, for approval that could not be warmer: "It is a wonderful book, both as a whole and in each of its parts. I was greatly inspired and I think it will be really a bridge." We are grateful to Schalom Ben-Chorin, the Israeli thinker, for calling THE BRIDGE a "momentous volume" and for seeing it as a sign "that a new spirit is astir in the United States"; grateful, too, to Sholom J. Kahn, for his words in the *Jerusalem Post*: "This superbly edited volume sets out to 'span an abyss,' 'open a road for communication,' and be 'an instrument of peace.' But it does so frankly from the point of view of the Catholic Church." Having underlined this limitation, as he

sees it, he nonetheless declared: "We can praise without reserve the scholarship and sensitivity of its execution. None of its score of essays is superficial or unrewarding."

When we declared it our purpose to serve the never resting dialogue of Christians and Jews, some Jewish critics asked whether a presentation in which "one party speaks but indirectly" can be called a dialogue. We think it can. Wherever the "other" is met not as an object but as a "thou," a living and loved being, there is dialogue. Again, to serve a dialogue is something deeper and more fruitful than to enter into a discussion. We could not in conscience, that is, in the love we bear for Christ, open our pages to a dispute on the basic tenets of our faith. We are committed, and gladly so; and it is precisely this commitment that binds us to the Jews. Our bond to them is not against or apart from our faith, but of it. When we call them "our separated brethren," we seek to express the authentic mind of the Church, for in *Mystici Corporis*, Pius XII pleads that genuine love for the Church must know no limits or borders. Not only her members, he says, but also those who are not yet one with us in Christ's Mystical Body, must we "recognize as brothers of Christ according to the flesh, destined together with us to eternal salvation." This being true of all the sons of Adam, it is most certainly true of the sons of Abraham, "the father of our faith."

Thus we should like to reiterate our stand in the words of Monsignor John J. Dougherty: "It is in the name of the One God that THE BRIDGE seeks a meeting of Jews and Christians. This name, however, is for us ever wedded to the name of Christ, a name that keeps Christians and Jews apart. THE BRIDGE, then, desires to make understood Him who separates, and those whom He separates. For as prejudice feeds on ignorance, love requires understanding and understanding knowledge."

As we restate our intention, we give thanks. The many encouragements we have received from our readers, both Jewish and Christian, give us assurance that what we called a "venture of love" was indeed so welcomed, and give us hope that this second volume too will serve a loving encounter.

JOHN M. OESTERREICHER